COMMONWEALTH OF VIRGINIA
Office of the Governor

GOVERNOR KAINE REQUESTS STATEWIDE DROUGHT DISASTER DECLARATION
~ More than 70 counties so far granted or seeking disaster status ~

RICHMOND – Governor Timothy M. Kaine has requested that the Secretary of the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) declare Virginia a statewide disaster area due to reductions in farm production caused by drought and high temperatures in 2007. A statewide designation would make farmers with qualifying losses throughout Virginia eligible for low-interest loans and any supplemental relief that may be provided by Congress.

To date, more than 70 counties have asked for or been granted drought disaster status by the USDA, which means that the majority of Virginia's localities have already requested federal assistance. Because agriculture in the entire state has been impacted by the drought, Governor Kaine and the Commissioner of the Virginia Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services (VDACS), Todd P. Haymore, decided a statewide designation is needed.

Delaware, Maryland and Tennessee have already asked for and received statewide drought disaster designations. Governor Kaine also sent letters to Virginia's Congressional Delegation encouraging them to support special legislation for direct financial assistance to farmers. Such assistance could offset drought losses that could have long-term negative economic consequences for Virginia's farm families.

 "This is an extraordinary year for Virginia," said Governor Kaine. "We have never sought a statewide drought disaster designation before. This year's drought is so pervasive, however, that we decided to act on behalf of the entire state."

VDACS Commissioner Haymore, added, "We have every expectation the USDA will grant this statewide designation. The benefits of disaster designation automatically will apply to every locality. Producers still will need to establish eligibility for aid."

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Disaster declarations make farm operators eligible to be considered for low-interest emergency loans from the Farm Service Agency (FSA) of the USDA, provided they meet certain eligibility requirements. FSA will consider each application on its own merits by taking into account the extent of the losses, security available, and repayment ability. Local FSA offices can provide affected farmers with additional information. A directory is available at
www.fsa.usda.gov/FSA/stateoffapp?mystate=va&area=home&subject=landing&topic=landing

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